Psitta scene

News about parrot conservation, aviculture and welfare from
The World Parrot Trust

Vol. 6 No. 1
FEBRUARY 1994

WORLD PARROT TRUST USA IS LAUNCHED Successful start at IAS Convention

By Michael Reynolds

Why have we taken our time about expanding the Trust into the USA? A reasonable question, bearing in mind that it is more than four years since the Trust was launched in the UK. The answer is that we are essentially a volunteer organisation and intend to keep it that way. We are in no hurry to appoint and pay high powered executives, or fund-raising consultants who mop up 40% of what they raise. This being so, we have had to wait for a combination of circumstances and individuals that created the right opportunity.

Things began to fall into place when we met up with Ms.Parker Thompson of Knoxville, Tennessee, who had persuaded her local bird club to donate $1500 to The World Parrot Trust. (Thank you, the Tennessee Valley Exotic Bird Club!). As you may imagine, we were impressed by this achievement, and discovered that Parker was extremely computer-literate, had relevant business experience, and would have the time to act as our US Administrator.Parker's husband put us in touch with his lawyers, a distinguished firm which was willing to set up 'The World Parrot Trust - USA' on a 'pro bono' basis: that is for free.

The next building block was an invitation from Phyllis Martin, then president of the International Aviculturists Society, for the Trust to have a free table at their January 1994 Convention at West Palm Beach, Florida. Having attended the previous year's convention we knew that the quality of the speakers would be high, the expenses comparatively low, and the atmosphere relaxed and friendly. We asked our long time friend and Trustee of World Parrot Trust - Canada, Desiree Wyant, to help us run our table.

At quite a late stage Charlie Munn - who has worked with us for some time on the conservation of Hyacinth and Lear's Macaws - was added to the team of speakers, and together with his colleagues Carlos Yamashita from Brazil and Eduardo Nycander from Peru he drew a lot of attention to the work of our Trust. Rosemary Low (editor of this newsletter) politely asked delegates to consider joining us, and John Stoodley - not a man to take 'No' for an answer - more or less insisted they should join. As a result of these notable recommendations, over 25% of the delegates joined on the spot.

Anyone who has ever tried to build up a charity will recognise that this was quite an achievement. My wife, Audrey, and Desiree Wyant worked feverishly to record these new members, three of whom became Life Members at $400 each.They also sold 70 of our beautiful new exclusive Firefly T and Sweatshirts, and conducted a raffle featuring prizes generously donated by the exhibitors at the convention.

At the fun-packed 'Vegas Night' a framed proof of our new Lear's Macaw limited edition print was

"psittacine
(sit´ă sīn) Belonging or allied to the parrots; parrot-like"

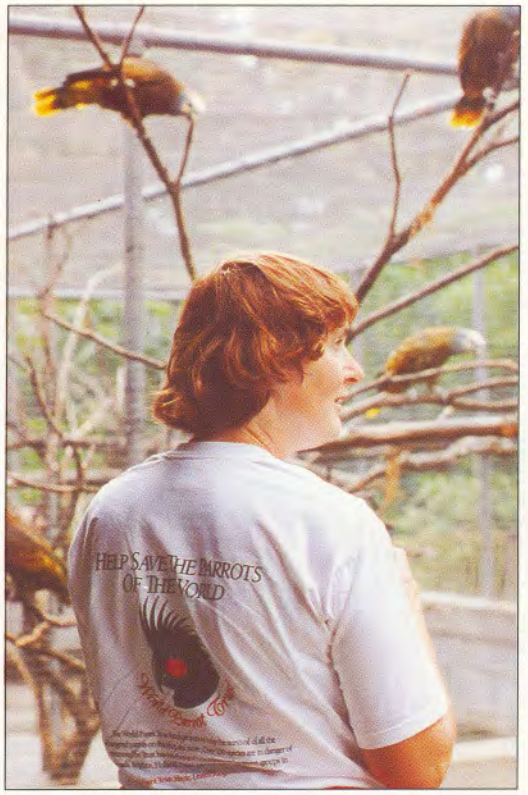
St. Vincent Parrot. See report on Page 10. *Photo: Mike Reynolds*

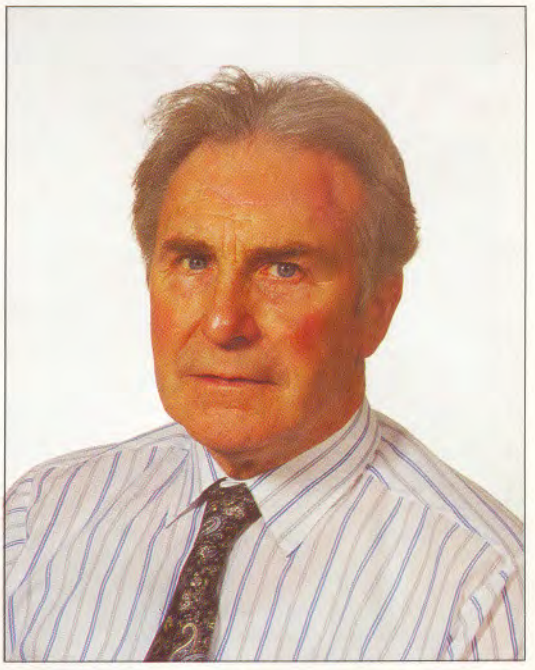
World Parrot Trust

EDITOR:
Rosemary Low,
The World Parrot Trust,
Glanmor House, Hayle,
Cornwall TR27 4HY, U.K.

CONTENTS:

Members of
IUCN
The World Conservation Union





Three key speakers at the IAS Convention who all supported The World Parrot Trust: Rosemary Low (top left), Charlie Munn (top right), John Stoodley (opposite).

sold for $475 by skilled auctioneer Mark Hagen. In total we raised over $5000, a very useful addition to our funds. But wait - as we were packing up our table, a lady delegate spoke to Charlie Munn and I about our work for the Lear's Macaw. She then wrote a cheque for $10000, the largest single donation the Trust has ever received. I cannot imagine a more auspicious beginning for the WPT-USA, and must take this opportunity to thank this lady (who wishes to remain anonymous), and IAS for their friendship and support. We look forward to working with them to win the help of aviculturists everywhere to fund parrot conservation in the wild, and polish the image of our fascinating hobby. At this convention I sensed that a new understanding was developing, a desire to do what we have been advocating for some time, that is 'put something back' to repay the parrots for all the benefits they have brought to aviculture.

I estimate that over 50% of the world's expenditure on parrot keeping, of pets or aviary birds, takes place in the USA. If I am anywhere near right, the potential for expanding The World Parrot Trust is very substantial. Moreover, US aviculturists are wealthier than those elsewhere, and are prepared to spend freely to give their precious birds the best accommodation, food and veterinary care. These are thoughtful, caring people, and it is only a short further step to realising that anyone who has ever kept a parrot shares responsibility for the past, present and future of all parrots. This responsibility can now best be met by joining The World Parrot Trust and supporting its work for a growing number of endangered parrot species, and for the welfare of every individual parrot.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite all US pet owners, aviculturists, bird club secretaries, and other concerned individuals to contact our US Administrator and ask for more information. Write to: Ms Parker Thompson, PO Box 32127, Knoxville TN 37930-2127. Or phone 615.531.3412. Individual membership is $25.

At the IAS Convention we received many offers of help from delegates. It seems likely that the Trust will be able to offer a team of speakers willing to present a slide show to bird clubs across the United States. This will take a little time to organise, and we willkeep readers advised as this scheme progresses.

We also had the opportunity to meet Dr. John W. McNeeley, a gentleman with considerable fund-raising experience. He offered to help the Trust in this area, and has been appointed Chairman of our fund-raising committee. He will welcome input from any member, and will do everything possible to facilitate any fund-raising initiative in the United States. Contact him at: PO Box 354062, Palm Coast FL 32135-4062. Phone 904.445.3255, Fax 904.446.4843.

It is our intention to have The World Parrot Trust represented at as many of the major US bird conventions as possible. We plan to be at the 5th Annual Midwest Avian Research Expo at Buffalo NY in July, and at the AFA Convention at Knoxville TN in August. We would appreciate hearing from members of other events which would provide opportunities to raise funds and sign up new members.

FIRST OBSERVATIONS IN THE WILD OF THE BLUE-THROATED MACAW IN BOLIVIA

By Otto Carlos Jordan, Zoologico de Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Santa Cruz, Bolivia; and Charles A. Munn, NYZS the Wildlife Conservation Society, International Wildlife Conservation

Since its discovery in the early 1800s the Blue-throated Macaw *(Ara glaucogularis)* largely has remained an enigma (Ridgely, Conservation of New World Parrots, R.F. Pasquier, ed., pp. 233-384, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980; Ingels et al., Le Gerfaut 71:283-294, 1981; Forshaw, Parrots of the World, Lansdowne Editions, 1989). Physical evidence of the species includes five museum specimens of unclear provenance (Ingels, ibid.) and approximately 200 live birds that Bolivian bird dealers have acquired from anonymous bird catchers. Conservationists have long assumed that this species is very rare and may be in immediate danger of extinction. There have been no published, first-hand observations of this species in the wild and no data to allow an assessment of its conservation status. Until now, there was not a single confirmed locality or habitat type in which to begin a survey.

Here we report the first observations of the wild Blue-throated Macaws in the Department of Beni in Amazonian Bolivia. The habitat is a seasonally-inundated mosaic of savannahs, palm groves, and low species diversity tropical forest of short stature. Late in the afternoon on 6 August 1992 C.A. Munn, Mariana V. Munn, and a local guide heard and momentarily observed a pair of macaws flying to roost in trees in a 1 ha island of trees in the savannah. Even from hundreds of meters the calls of this species were distinguishably higher in frequency and of different quality than those of the Blue-and-Yellow Macaw.Between 06:30 and 08:30 h on 7 August 1992 the Munns and the guide photographed and observed a pair preening and allopreening on a treetop in that same forest island. They also discovered that the perch tree was above a live *Acrocomia aculeata* palm in which the pair appeared to be excavating a nest cavity. The opening of the new cavity was approximately 14m above the ground, and a typical pile of fresh palm fiber debris lay on the ground beneath. In September 1992, a research team of NYZS the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) began study of this excavating pair and of two other pairs at other nests located within 10km of the first nest site. The two other nests were in cavities in the trunks of *Attalea princeps* palms.

In January 1993, just after the conclusion of WCS's research on the nesting birds, Oliver Morvan, Jean Saint-Pie, and Marc Boussekey visited our study site and independently discovered and observed a few of the birds from the same population of *glaucogularis* (Boussekey, pers. comm.). They reported an individual bird repeatedly perching high in a specimen of *Tabebuia avellanedae,* a large tropical tree in the family Bignoniaceae. They report that this tree species is a conspicuous component of the vegetation on the islands of forest that typically remain above the floodline during the prolonged flood season in the Beni lowlands. A local guide informed them that the macaw had nested in the past in a cavity in that individual tree. They suggest that competition for nest sites or food with other larger species of macaws, particularly *A. ararauna,* could present a threat to the survival of small populations of glaucogularis.

To date we have observed 28 birds at these two adjacent sites, and we have heard local reports of two more small populations of the species, each of which is more than 100 km from the present site.

The habitat where we found this species resembles that of the third-hand reports presented by Forshaw (1989): "gallery forest along watercourses," but this description requires elaboration. Subsequent observations of feeding ecology of this macaw suggest that it requires the locally-abundant palm *Attalea phalerata* at which they eat the sticky, sweet mesocarp of the ripe and nearly-ripe fruits. They also ate the ripe or nearly-ripe mesocarp of fruits of *Acrocomia aculeata* palms. On occasion the birds opened and drank the liquid from the very immature fruits of both palm species.

Until 1980s, there was uncertainty over whether this species differed from the larger, but otherwise similar Blue-and-Yellow Macaw (A. ararauna), which third-hand reports suggested was sympatric with the Blue-throated Macaw (Ingels et al. 1981). Our observations confirmed this sympatry and showed that these macaws are outnumbered at our site by Blue-and-Yellow Macaws by a factor of 20 or more.

Our guide (38 years old) was the only person we have found in that part of the Beni who in the past has trapped and traded large macaws. He reported that since 1977 he had caught perhaps a total of 1000 Blue-and-Yellow and Red-and-Green Macaws and 6-9 Blue-throated Macaws and sold them to specialized businessmen/bird dealers from a major Bolivian city. In 1984, Bolivia outlawed this trade, and our guide stopped trapping macaws and switched to wage labor. Nevertheless, he reported that a few wealthy bird buyers in the major city still bought and traded small numbers of the most valuable, rarer macaws whenever international dealers placed orders. Moreover, he reported that an Argentinian bird dealer currently was offering illegal Bolivian dealers a high price for Blue-throated Macaws.

Because the Blue-throated Macaw may be extremely rare, still has a high price on its head, and is not yet assured protection from smugglers, we have chosen not to reveal the localities of our study or the name of our guide. Rather, we shall first determine the species' conservation status and implement measures for its protection. Scientists wishing further information about the species may write to the second author, who, in conjunction with Bolivian authorities, will evaluate each request.

Acknowledgments.
NYZS the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) financed this research in its entirety. We thank Dr. Mario Baudoin W., Director General of the National System of Protected Areas of the Bolivian National Secretariat of the Environment, for permission to research in Bolivia. We also are grateful to Maria Marconi and Juan Pablo Aroe of the Conservation Data Center of Bolivia for help with satellite imagery and cartography. Andrew Taber and Delores Ayersa of WCS provided valuable logistical support and advice. We wish to extend our warmest thanks to the extremely hospitable Bolivian landowners and local people. Without expert guidance from our guide we never would have succeeded. We regret that security for the macaw prevents us from properly thanking these people here by name.

Blue-throated Macaws at Paradise Park.

PREVENTATIVE MANAGEMENT IN AVICULTURE

By Joanne Abramson

The primary purpose of aviculture is bird breeding. Those engaging in acquisition of single specimens are better thought of as collectors. As aviculturists we have a multitude of jobs to perform. The most important is to care for our birds in the most humane way possible. It is this definition of humane, or lack of understanding of it, that can create a problem for aviculturists. What is the definition of good captive breeding management techniques?

Success in aviculture can be broken down into a few key areas; a healthy pair (hen and cock) of birds, proper housing, proper nutrition, some knowledge of common diseases associated with the species chosen, assessable avian veterinary care. Common sense is a great benefit, but many seem to get by without this last ingredient.

The Birds are clearly the central focus of a successful breeding program. Long term success requires that the most perfect birds be chosen. This is no different in any other animal breeding profession. A dairyman looks for the best milk producing cows and champion dog breeders look for the best stock that meet the species standards. Health is the first priority, followed by how closely the species standards are met. Cost is the last consideration, though clearly the price might be the deciding factor on whether you get a bird or not.

Housing is an important concern to every aviculturists. Though birds can die due to hurricanes, floods and fire, they do not die of snow, rain or sun. Those are management problems. It could be said that in some instances the first three natural disasters are management errors as well since evacuation of the sight prior to the "natural" disaster would have avoided the birds death. Unfortunately, few aviculturists have evacuation plans and enough equipment or man power to evacuate all their birds.

What is humane housing? Large enough to house the bird species in such a way that they can fly comfortably without hitting their wings on the aviary sides. There are few aviaries big enough, but many far too small. A common myth is that if given too much space the birds will not reproduce. Impossible! In the wild they have unlimited space and would be extinct if "too much space" was a problem.

Complicating the question of humane housing is that what is humane in one location would be inhumane management in another location. For instance, an aviculturist in the state of Arizona where the temperatures can easily get above 110 F. during the summer in some areas, would require special housing, nestboxes and diet to correspond to that environment. Automatic overhead misters, shade, ventilation, cool

Greenwinged Macaws four (39 grams) and six (106 grams) days old. Baby macaws require correct nutrition, heat and humidity to survive. *Photo: Rick Droz*

Five day old Scarlet Macaw being handfed. *Photo: Joanne Abramson*

water, a diet that does not spoil or is replaced frequently and wood or plastic nest barrels are some of the things that would be needed to treat birds in a humane manner. If birds were housed in Denmark, cold would be a major factor in appropriate care of the birds. Insulated walls, heat, high energy foods, useable (not frozen) water would all be considerations.

A few years ago in Northern California, an unusually cold winter occurred. In this normally temperate environment snow fell and remained on the ground for over a week due to the severe cold weather. Some aviculturists birds died. During the aftermath, assessments by local avian veterinarians showed three reasons for the cause of death;

Improper housing. This included everything from a lack of appropriate shelter to metal or plastic perches (caused severe frost bitten feet).

Birds kept on minimal amounts of food. These birds were kept on a ration of only what they would eat in a day.

Lack of available water. Due to the unusual cold, most water dishes froze, and the birds became dehydrated.

All these reasons would be preventable with proper management procedures. Some of which need to change with the weather.

Nutrition is a significant factor in long term health and breeding success. Diet is a crucial part of preventative management. Formulating an appropriate diet for the species is an important aspect of aviculture.

Knowledge of avian diseases is a valuable asset to any aviculturist. Especially understanding those diseases and problems associated with the species the aviculturist is breeding.

Accessible avian veterinarian care is an essential part of keeping birds in top condition. Avian medicine is changing rapidly, with identification of new diseases and vaccines that will continue to influence avicultural breeder management. Good communication with your avian veterinarian is essential for optimal achievement.

Prior to 1990, a group of aviculturists and avian veterinarians joined forces in the United States and started the Model Aviculture Program or MAP. This voluntary inspection and certification program's purpose is to self-regulate, rather that government regulate the avicultural industry.

As we all know, aviculturists worldwide seem to have very independent ideas about their ability to keep birds the way they want to. While this independence in its greatest form is the impetus for dynamic, innovative breeding success, at times it is also a hindrance to clear communication with government authorities that tend to be suspicious of bird breeders in general.

The concept of MAP was that those that knew the birds the best (the bird breeders and the avian veterinarians) would come up with guidelines that other breeders could follow to improve their facilities to match minimum standards for bird care. In order to

The nursery at the author's facility provides individual bins for each clutch of chicks. Laminated walls and a linoleum floor provide easy to disinfect surfaces. *Photo: Rick Droz*

There are geographical variations of some species of parrots, including macaws. These two Scarlet Macaws represent two different types; a wide band of yellow on the right (1045 grams) and a narrow yellow band on the left (1210 grams). *Photo: Rick Droz*

Hyacinth Macaws at 72 and 76 days old. These healthy babies weigh 1510 and 1600 grams respectively. *Photo: Rick Droz*

qualify as a member of MAP the aviculturist requests an application form and returns it with a nominal fee depending on the number of aviaries the aviculturists have. One through fifteen aviaries is fifty dollars U.S. and over fifteen cages is one hundred dollars U.S. The aviculturist chooses their own veterinarian to review their breeding facility. The veterinarian comes to the aviculturists breeding facility and follows a simple checklist of questions which determine that the birds are being kept in appropriate facilities *for that species*. Once the form is completed it is sent back to the MAP office and if the aviculturist passed the inspection they become a MAP member. Recertification is required every two years and the certification can not be bought with the facility since it is the aviculturist that is certified, not the breeding facility. So if a facility is sold, the certificate needs to be reapplied for in the new owners name with an additional inspection made.

The inspection consists of key areas including quarantine facilities, flights, nutrition, pediatrics and record keeping systems. The purpose for each question is explained in detail on a separate answer sheet which insures that both the veterinarian and the aviculturist understand the reason for the questions. All the questions were chosen to insure that basic care for the birds is maintained. By following the forms the veterinarian and aviculturist's communication and understanding of the needs of the birds can only be enhanced. A sample form of the questionnaire and the explanation is available to the aviculturist prior to the inspection so they can see what criteria are being considered for certification.

One of the main reasons that the MAP organizers got together was their feeling that self regulation from within the bird breeding community would be more effective than if the government regulated the industry. Self-regulation does not make it any easier to pass the inspection. It still requires that several important aspects of bird care are adhered to in order to get a certification. The program gives latitude to the veterinarian who is the final judge if the facility is appropriate based on the guidelines and the environmental conditions of the facility.

Having the money to buy the birds does not give aviculturists the right to do whatever we want with the birds. The birds are still entitled to proper diet and management. In the ever changing world of aviculture basic care might need to be changed depending on what is known about the birds at the time. For instance, until a year ago the availability of a test to determine Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease and Polyomavirus was unavailable, now these are commonly in use in the United States. Part of the health guarantee of newly acquired birds would be the inclusion of these screens to insure that the birds you are selling (or buying) are free of these diseases. In the future, other diseases such as Macaw Wasting Disease will have available tests as well. Most of the funding for these avian medical breakthroughs will come from funding by aviculturists. For anyone that has seen the death of a bird from one of these viruses it is obvious that contributions to avian medical research is crucial to the survival of ALL of our aviaries. Viruses are a menacing part of aviculture. The poultry and cattle industries commonly fund their own research to eradicate fatal diseases in their industry. Aviculturists will need to do the same. Who else but us care enough to see the disease caused deaths eliminated?

Aviculture will continue to go through growth phases. There is so much we do not know about the birds which share our everyday life. It will take a unification of competent aviculturists in order to ride the changes in the coming years.

PUERTO RICAN PARROT CONSERVATION:

A retrospective Evaluation by two former leaders of the program (1972-1986)

By Noel F. R. Snyder and James W. Wiley

An intensive conservation program on behalf of the Puerto Rican Parrot *(Amazona vittata)* began in late 1968 under the sponsorship of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the branch of the Puerto Rican government known now as the Department of Natural Resources. This program followed by over a decade of study of the species conducted by Jose Rodriguez-Vidal. Rodriguez-Vidal amassed considerable baseline data on nesting and feeding habits of the parrots and documented that the species had declined seriously in the present century, disappearing from much of its original island-wide range. However, there were still about 200 individuals left in the Luquillo Mountains at the eastern end of the island. At that time it was still reasonable to hope that the substantial area of mature rainforest vegetation in this range - some 44 square miles under U.S. Forest Service jurisdiction - might in itself provide an adequate foundation for long-term preservation of the species.

Unfortunately, by the late 1960s it was becoming clear that the Puerto Rican Parrot was still declining despite near complete protection of its last remaining habitat. Much of this continuing decline was due to rampant poaching of nestlings for the local bird trade, a practice that did not die out until the late 1960s. Other potential causes of decline were as yet uninvestigated. Fortunately, under the provisions of the recently enacted Federal Endangered Species Act of 1966 there was at last an administrative framework for development of a full-scale research and conservation program to aid the species. As a result of the urging of Ray Erickson of the USFWS and Frank Wadsworth of the USFS, such a program was initiated by the end of 1968, with Cam Kepler as the first leader of field studies.

By 1971 it was clear that less than 20 individuals were left in the wild and that they were disappearing rapidly, while causes of their continuing decline remained unsure. The situation was clearly desperate, and the agencies involved came to a consensus that there was no viable alternative but to attempt capture of all remaining wild individuals in a last-ditch effort to save the species through captive breeding.

Thankfully, as events proceeded, capture of all remaining wild birds never took place. While a captive population was established, it was done without obliteration of the wild population, mainly by taking eggs from the last wild pairs. This course of action allowed intensive research into the causes of decline to continue. Had the wild population been captured before such causes were well understood, the prospects for reestablishment of a wild population from captivity would now be very poor indeed. Further, placing all hopes for the species in captive breeding would have been inherently much more risky than splitting risks between wild and captive populations. Contrary to early hopes, the Puerto Rican Parrot has proved to be a very difficult species to breed consistently in captivity. In over 20 years of efforts, involving a succession of capable personnel, production of young has continued to fall short of what would be necessary to fuel a quantitatively vigorous release program or even to guarantee long-term survival of a captive population.

Taking of captives began in earnest in 1973, when the wild population was down to 16 individuals. Five fledglings were raised in captivity during this year, while three young fledged in the wild. Thereafter, the rate of taking captives was reduced, with a general policy of allowing each wild pair to fledge at least some young in the wild each year.

Simultaneously, greatly expanded efforts were initiated from blinds. Two major threats to the species became apparent - predation on eggs and young by the Pearly-eyed Thrasher *(Margarops fuscatus)* and a shortage of optimal nest sites. Approximately four out of five nesting attempts were failing, mainly due to the thrasher (a recent invader of the forest), and it appeared that the parrot was suffering primarily from inadequate reproduction. Mortality rates of free-flying parrots did not prove to be excessively high.

Through the mid 1970s a major emphasis was given to studies of the biology of the Pearly eyed Thrasher in an effort to develop means to counter the depredations of this species. Concurrently, parrot nests were intensively guarded and marauding thrashers were shot when they attempted to enter the nests. At some nests under heavy thrasher pressure, parrot eggs were incubated artificially and the parrots given dummy eggs through the incubation period to prevent egg losses. Fortunately, by 1975 an effective and low cost method for thwarting thrashers was developed that involved (1) modifying the structure of parrot nests to make them unattractive to thrashers and (2) deliberately providing the thrashers with their own boxes immediately adjacent to the parrot nests. Thrashers accepting these boxes then served as guards of the parrot nests by excluding other thrashers from the vicinity. Subsequent to 1975, we documented no further losses of Puerto Rican Parrot nest contents to thrasher predation.

By means of these efforts and by rehabilitating parrot nests affected by penetration of rainwater, we were able to increase nesting success of the species to nearly 70% , and the species began a slow recovery in the wild from a low point of 13 free-flying wild adults in 1975. Our anticipation was that we would shortly be seeing the formation of many new breeding pairs of parrots, and because surveys demonstrated that good natural nest sites were rare, we began a major program of providing optimal nest sites for the parrots in the nesting areas. In this program we constructed completely artificial sites of PVC pipe and also rehabilitated many natural tree cavities with deficient characteristics.

Alas, despite the provision of these sites, despite a steady increase in the size of the wild population, and despite the formation of many new pairs of parrots, we witnessed no perceptible increase in the size of the wild breeding population for the next dozen years. With few exceptions, the number of pairs laying eggs each year remained a monotonous total of four through this entire period. Occasionally one of these pairs was lost through mortality, but it was almost immediately replaced by another pair moving into its nest site. Other new pairs formed associations with good quality nest sites, but year after year they did not lay eggs. The causes of this failure were not obvious, as the established breeding pairs continued to produce young at a healthy rate.

Only when the wild population finally grew larger than 40 birds in the late 1980s, did the number of breeding pairs at last begin to increase. This development suggested that the reluctance to breed seen in earlier years might in some way be related to deficiencies in "critical mass or density" of the population.

Then in late 1989, the natural disaster we had all been dreading for many years finally occurred - the Luquillo Mountains suffered an almost direct hit by Hurricane Hugo. The eastern half of the species range was devastated, with nearly complete defoliation of essentially all forest trees and massive amounts of branch and trunk breakage. But surprisingly, although the wild parrot population was reduced about 50% by the storm, overall breeding showed considerable net enhancement in the years following the storm. In fact, the number of breeding pairs increased to six in 1991, 1992 and 1993. Perhaps favoured in part by enhanced production of fruit by forest trees following the hurricane, these pairs have been exceptionally productive, and the wild population has already recovered to nearly the size it had enjoyed before Hugo.

Whether this encouraging increase in reproduction in the wild population may sustain itself in the years ahead remains to be seen, but in any event, it now appears that the importance of hurricanes to island parrot population needs reevaluation. Not only did Hurricane Hugo cause an apparent massive increase in food supplied for the parrots (to be sure, after a period of food scarcity immediately following the storm), but many of the broken branch bases of trees produced by the storm will presumably rot out to become nesting sites for the species in the years ahead. Because of these and other potentially beneficial effects of hurricanes, it is plausible to speculate that hurricanes may actually be

essential for long-term survival of the Puerto Rican Parrot. As counterintuitive as it may at first seem, it is even possible that one of the more significant general underlying resistance factors to recovery of the parrot in recent decades may have been the absence of any major hurricanes hitting the mountains since the early 1930s.

While the wild population has shown an encouraging ability to persist and slowly increase over the years, our early hopes for a major assist from captive breeding in recovery of the species have not yet been fulfilled. Reproduction in captivity has generally been much worse than in the wild, despite a larger captive population (now over 50 individuals) and despite a major investment of resources in attempting to improve captive productivity. Meanwhile, reproduction of Hispaniolan Parrots *(Amazona ventralis)* used as surrogates at the same aviary, has been consistently strong, a comparison often overlooked by critics and a comparison suggesting that the low productivity of captive Puerto Rican Parrots might trace more to intrinsic characteristics of the birds than to a failure in propagation techniques or to deficiencies of the aviary facilities.

Kelly Brock and Bradley White (1992) have suggested that the major factor depressing production in captive Puerto Rican Parrots has been low fertility (averaging 27.7% among egg-laying pairs) due to the relatively inbred nature of the founding population. They emphasised that infertility in captive pairs appeared related to the degree of kinship of pair members. However, their data indicate only a weak and statistically non significant correlation between the extent of infertility and the degree of genetic similarity of pair members, and this correlation at best explains only a small fraction of the variance in fertility. Further, the genetically similar (and smaller) wild population has continued to exhibit excellent fertility (87.7% in the 1970s and 1980s), and if genetic factors were the major cause of captive infertility, we would expect to see a similar or greater incidence of infertility problems in the wild. While the major problem in captivity has clearly been low fertility, we suspect that the basis of this problem may lie more in the behavioural than in the genetic realm. Nevertheless, we continue to support studies to minimise potential genetic difficulties.

Despite the low numbers of young produced in captivity, the captive population had a positive bolstering role for the wild population from the late 1970s through the mid 1980s, when captive nestlings were fostered into wild nests whenever appropriate opportunities arose. These captive-produced young survived as well as wild-produced young and led to an enhanced rate of increase of the wild population. Unfortunately, fostering of young into wild nests was discontinued in the late 1980s, though it has been revived in more recent years.

The disappointing production of captive young has led to considerable controversy over the future of the conservation program. For some observers, such as the Captive Breeding Specialist Group of the IUCN (which conducted a Population Viability Analysis of the species in 1989), the salvation of the parrot is still to be seen in an emphasis on captive breeding, although with some changes in captive-breeding procedures. This group even called for pulling all wild birds into captivity after Hurricane Hugo - deja vu. Others point out that the captive-breeding program has been expensive - averaging several hundred thousand dollars per year - and that after 20 years of efforts, involving a variety of personnel and experimentation with a variety of techniques, there has been no discernable improvement in the low rate of captive production. These observers emphasise that the facile explanations often offered by critics for poor aviary location - problems with techniques and an allegedly poor reproduction - fail to account for the high degree of success achieved in the Luquillo aviary with Hispaniolan Parrots (see Brock and White 1992), and may need to be replaced with a recognition that Puerto Rican Parrots just do not breed well in captivity. If so, the monies put into captive breeding, might be much better spent elsewhere.

Our own viewpoint lies in the middle of the road. So long as the wild Luquillo population remains at a critically low level, we favour continuing near-term efforts to improve captive-breeding techniques and to release captive-bred young into the wild (especially by fostering). But once the wild Luquillo population has recovered to a relatively secure status, assuming it may, we favour discontinuing captive-breeding efforts if captive production continues to remain in the doldrums.

In the long term it is important not only to resuscitate the Luquillo Mountains population but also to establish new wild populations in other forested regions of the island, such as Rio Abajo Forest, where a second aviary for the species has recently been created.

Puerto Rican Parrots nesting successfully in a rehabilitated cavity of a palo colorado in 1975. Prior to patchwork, this site was thoroughly wet inside. Photo: Noel Snyder

While the captive population has always been envisioned as central in such efforts, if the wild Luquillo population does recover, establishment of other wild populations may conceivably prove to be more successful and much more cost-effective with translocations of wild-caught birds from the Luquillo population than by releases of captive-bred individuals.

The overall recovery rate of the wild Puerto Rican Parrot population has been slow, but the trend has been unmistakably upward, and we remain optimistic that the species may achieve full recovery. While some observers have been impatient with the low rate of increase and have made a variety of recommendations for basic change in orientation of the conservation program, we believe that many of these recommendations (e.g., bringing all birds into captivity, abandoning efforts to save the Luquillo Mountains population because the habitat might be "wrong", dispersing captives to zoos or aviculturists, etc.) pose major risks that could jeopardise ultimate recovery of the species. Nevertheless, we also believe firmly that the differences of opinion that exist regarding the best ways to achieve recovery are a basically healthy part of the recovery process, and we hope that the forum for debate of strategies will always remain open - for others as well as for ourselves. We believe that the continuing conservation program, with its emphasis on aiding the welfare of the wild population and its perception of the captive population as a supportive entity to the wild population, is still on the right tracks.

Reference Cited:

Brock, M.K., and B.N. White. 1992. Application of DNA fingerprinting to the recovery program of the endangered Puerto Rican Parrot.

Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 89:11121-11125.

GETTING IT RIGHT

Capturing the elusive qualities of Lear's Macaw

By Michael Reynolds

It all started at the World Parrot Trust Symposium, organised by our dynamic Benelux branch in May 1993 at Antwerp Zoo. One of the delegates was David Johnston, an exceptional wildlife painter and parrot devotee.

David offered to paint any parrot we chose, and donate it to the Trust so we could offer a limited edition print to our members. The original painting would also be ours, to be sold for the benefit of the Trust. This was an incredibly generous offer, especially bearing in mind that David's painting of the St. Lucia Amazon Parrot was sold by auction at the Loro Parque Convention in 1990 for $18000.

At the Antwerp Symposium our Benelux supporters had raised over £4000 for our work on Lear's Macaw, so that bird seemed the obvious candidate to have its portrait painted by David Johnston. I mentioned David's offer to Charlie Munn, who was a speaker at the symposium and who directs our Lear's Macaw project. 'That's great' said Charlie, 'why doesn't he come to Bahia with me next month and see the bird in the field? To understand Lear's Macaw he has to see the desperate place where it lives.'

Shortly afterwards, David found himself in North East Brazil, carried there with the generous help of 'British Airways Assisting Conservation'. This comparatively unsung aspect of British Airways chose The World Parrot Trust three years ago as one of only a handful of conservation organisations it supports. Since then it has helped us in numerous ways, flying people and equipment to many parts of the world. As I may have said before, readers should bear in mind this excellent work of BA's when booking flights.

So David Johnston spent a week in Bahia, photographing the drought-stricken land of the Lear's Macaw. He brought back plenty of references of the landscape and the Licuri palms on which this macaw relies, almost exclusively, for its food supply. The bird itself, however, was elusive. Always wary of man - and with good reason as they are at risk of being shot for the pot, or when feeding on the local farmers' meagre crops - the birds were only seen at a distance.

Back in his studio in Blackpool, UK, David started on the painting. He assembled all the photographic and other references available, and also went to see the birds in the care of Harry Sissen. Eventually the painting was completed, and handed over to our printers for proofs to be made. I was in the United States at the time the proofs were ready, and some were sent to me. I was absolutely delighted with the contrast between the dust-dry palm tree on which the pair of Lear's are perched, and the brilliance and vivacity of the birds themselves.

I had the proof framed, hung it on the wall and lived with it for a week or so. It gradually dawned on me that the birds did not have an indication of the elusive dull green colouring around the head and neck which is one of the several features which distinguish Lear's Macaw from the Hyacinth Macaw. (The others are: smaller size, different shape of facial skin, generally duller plumage, fine silver ring around eye.)

I sent a proof to Dr. Susan Clubb at Parrot Jungle, Miami, who has had close knowledge of Lear's Macaw when they were bred there. She made some very helpful suggestions and also sent photos from their files. I then got in touch with Dr. John Olsen, chief vet at Busch Gardens, Tampa, Florida, where the only two Lear's Macaws in the US are kept. He kindly arranged for me to visit the off-exhibit breeding area where the birds - regrettably, two females - live, and I was able to shoot a couple of rolls of film of these delightful birds. I was also able to get shots of a pair of Hyacinth Macaws in an adjacent aviary and in identical light conditions. You can see from the side-by-side pictures here that the Lear's Macaw is a very different bird. Even its more diffident personality is apparent, highlighted by the typical way the Hyacinth Macaw is inflicting his personality on the camera!

As a result of all this I was able to send David a number of new photographic references, in some of which the 'green effect' is easy to see, and in some of which it is completely absent. The fact is that it is a trick of the light, almost an optical illusion. I felt, nevertheless, that our precious Lear's painting should show this distinctive feature, and asked David to make some alterations to the original painting. A man of almost saintly patience, he was happy to do so, just as anxious as I was for it to be accurate.

Now our limited edition of 900 is ready, and we hope for a flood of orders from our members and others interested in helping the conservation of this critically endangered species.The price is £35 or$50, a low figure for such an outstanding work. The print comes with a brief report on the plight of Lear's Macaw and the effort needed to ensure its survival, by Dr. Charles A. Munn III. Please note that apart from the actual printing cost, every penny received from the sale of this print will go directly to our fund for the Lear's Macaw project.This project aims to create large new plantations of the Licuri palm on which the birds rely, and it will take at least twelve years for the palm trees, and thus the project, to reach fruition. This is no 'quick fix' situation; substantial funds will have to be available for many years. Please use the order form in this newsletter, and recommend this print to anyone who may be interested. Finally, sincere thanks from The World Parrot Trust to David Johnston, the artist who got it right.

Photographed at Busch Gardens, Tampa, Florida in December '93. Lear's Macaw on the left, Hyacinth Macaw on the right, hogging the camera.

Lear's Macaw
Anodorhynchus leari

From an Original Painting by David Johnston.

Limited Edition No.

Footnote:
So far as we are aware, only six Lear's Macaws remain in captivity: a very old male and a female at Harry Sissen's; the two females at Busch Gardens; one female with Nelson Kawall in Sao Paulo; and another female at Sao Paulo Zoo. While visiting Busch Gardens I had the opportunity of talking to the management about The World Parrot Trust and its work for Lear's Macaw. They plan to double check the sex of the two birds there, and also to put them on display in order to promote understanding of the conservation needs of the species. I suggested that they might wish to use that opportunity to raise funds for our 'Palm for a Parrot' programme. This would undoubtedly be the best way for those two macaws to help their conspecifics in the wild.

ALL ABOARD THE CONSERVATION EXPRESS!

By Rosemary Low

The loud, slightly metallic calls of the parrots suddenly brought the forest to life. Light was slowly filtering through the trees but the rainclouds hung overhead, giving the Buccament Valley a slightly brooding air. Yes, I was on St Vincent, home of one of the most magnificent parrots in the world. This species has been the subject of much controversy over the years mainly because of its value as an item of illegal trade.

No-one seeing this large, colourful Amazon could fail to understand why it would be coveted by those without scruples but possessing plenty of financial resources. These days, however, it is a rare event for illegal export to occur. The higher standard of education on the island and promotion of the importance of the protection of the forest and its inhabitants, has resulted in a gradually changing attitude towards the environment.

The World Parrot Trust is playing a significant role in this, which is how I unexpectedly found myself on St Vincent. I had been invited to speak at the second convention of the International Aviculturists' Society in Florida where Michael and Audrey Reynolds had been very successfully promoting the Trust. They were leaving for St Vincent immediately afterwards and as I had three days available before flying back to the Canary Islands, I decided to accompany them.

It was nearly 14 years since I had been on St Vincent; it would be interesting to see for myself what had been accomplished in the intervening years and, hopefully, to again catch a glimpse of parrots in the forest. So, as the parrots started to move from their roosting sites Mike, Audrey and I found ourselves at an altitude of about 4570m (1,500ft) in the Vermont area. Our guide was Fitzroy Springer, the Wildlife Protection Officer. We were strategically placed, with a view over the lush rainforest which forms part of the parrot reserve. This is an area of 10,870 acres in the centre of the island, set aside in 1987.

At that early hour, parrot calls came from all directions. Sightings of pairs flying overhead were frequent. Initially, the birds were silhouetted against the dull sky. As the light intensity increased slightly, the brilliant orange patches in the wings were lit against the green backdrop of forest. For an hour or so, the forest vibrated with their calls as they greeted the day and flew off to find food. By about 7.45am the calls grew less frequent but we lingered for an hour, hoping for a few more glimpses.

A breeding pair of St Vincent parrots in the government aviaries.

The St Vincent Parrot *(Amazona guildingii)* is found only on this island, where its numbers are believed to be in the region of 450. If the population is declining, it would be as a result of deforestation which is perhaps about 1% per annum. Some reafforestation is also occurring. However, there is no evidence of decline. The next census is due to be held in March this year. A census is carried out every second year. This year five or so forest officers will spend a week in five different parts of the forest, trying to estimate numbers. There has been a suggestion that 500 would be the maximum number that the forests could hold. I asked Fitzroy Springer if he thought the population had reached this number. He thought not and inferred that the population was increasing because parrots are being seen in agricultural areas where they had not occurred since those areas ceased to be forested. Could this mean that new feeding areas have been sought because some forested areas hold populations at maximum levels?

As yet it is not possible to answer this question. Parrots are difficult to study in this mountainous habitat. However, there appear to be several populations which do not overlap and which may be genetically identifiable. The St Vincent Parrot is interesting in that it has two or more colour morphs. When I asked Fitzroy Springer if the morphs could be related to different localities, he told me that parrots of the green morph occurred in the Richmond area, also that they tended to be larger. (Most St Vincent Parrots are basically a tawny brown.)

Until recently, visitors to the island who wished to venture into the rainforest, had no particular path to follow if they were interested in observing parrots. Then, in 1990, the Vermont nature trails were opened. We used one of these trails to reach the look-out point. The trail is maintained in good condition: log sections form steps in the steeper areas. The number of visitors using the trails rises annually, as environmental awareness increases.

This is encouraging as it helps Vincentians to realise that the forest and parrots attract tourists and therefore tourist dollars. American visitors make up the majority of tourists as St Vincent is only 1,600 miles south east of Miami. It can be reached via a 3½ hour flight to Barbados, then a 35 minute flight to St Vincent and the Grenadines. St Vincent is situated in the chain of islands which curves from Puerto Rico in the north, down to Tobago, just north of the northern tip of Venezuela. It is one of the most southerly of the islands (Windward group of the Lesser Antilles). Situated only 24 miles south of St Lucia, it cannot be compared with St Lucia where the tourist industry is concerned. St Vincent captures a much smaller number of tourists, partly because it lacks an international airport. For those interested in natural beauty St Vincent has more un-spoiled forest and less development. However, as in all the islands of the Caribbean, a rapidly expanding human population inevitably results in the forests being even further encroached upon.

St Vincent can boast of the oldest botanical garden in the western hemisphere. This location is one of particular interest, for here St Vincent Parrots can be seen at close quarters. The aviaries currently house 30 birds. Most of these are former pets; others have been hatched there since 1988. A short while before that, Vincentians who kept native parrots were permitted to keep them, provided that they registered and ringed them,but it is not permitted to keep any bird not registered at that time. Today, 47 are registered.

Fitzroy Springer took us inside the aviary, whose occupants looked in excellent condition. Those not set up for breeding had an adequate area in which to fly. The diet is carefully controlled, as obesity is a major problem unless the diet is carefully controlled. The birds are fed once daily on fruits such as guavas, various citrus, banana and local fruits grown just behind the aviary, such as plum rose and golden apple. Fitzroy told me that he sometimes supplements their diet with gommier seeds, Spanish ash pods and figs, collected from the forest. The parrots receive no seed; a limited quantity of peanuts are fed (50lbs are bought every three months). Those rearing young receive cooked chicken.

On this diet the birds remain slim - but fertility is not high. In 1993, 13 of the 15 eggs laid were infertile. However, more young

would be an embarrassment as the existing accommodation is already stretched to its limit. Five pairs are set up for breeding, one pair per aviary, the other birds being housed in three flights, the construction of which was financed by Palmitos Park, Gran Canaria.

To date, I was told, 12 of the 15 young hatched have all survived, all parent-reared. All concerned are to be congratulated on this excellent result. However, young bred in the future cannot continue to be added to the existing aviaries. In a leaflet published by the Forestry Division, the goal of the programme is stated to be "to breed parrots for eventual release into the wild and to provide genetic support for an international breeding programme." It must be time for a decision to be made regarding the destination of the young birds, before their numbers are reduced as a result of over-crowding.

Mike Reynolds' main purpose in visiting the island concerned the Vincie Express, the bus donated to the Forestry Division by The World Parrot Trust. It had recently arrived and was about to be introduced to a group of children. The bus is destined to convey a message of conservation awareness to all the island's schoolchildren. It follows in the path of the Trust's buses on St Lucia and Dominica. They have been outstandingly successful in promoting conservation in a manner which grasps the attention of the younger members of the community. Then their parents listen to the enthusiastic response of their children.

So it will be on St Vincent. We watched the absorbed interest of the children exclaiming at the colourful mural on each side of the bus. It depicts a St Vincent Parrot in its forest habitat - a colourful scene which lingers in one's mind. Then the children entered, to learn about forest and parrot protection from the exhibits inside. One is a jigsaw which the children must piece together. It demonstrates how different aspects of the environment are dependant upon each other. Another is a scene of deforestation with water running down the mountainside. The water is brown as a result of soil erosion. The next exhibit shows intact rainforest. Here the water is sparkling and clean, for the soil is protected by the trees.

From the speakers at the front of the bus, came the appropriate sounds of a song written by Paul Butler (a pioneer of conservation education in the Caribbean). It broadcasts the message that "Vincie" is their special parrot, unique to the island, and must be protected. WPT's bus will, we hope, become synonymous with survival of its Amazon and with the pride which its people feel for this majestic bird.

Before leaving St Vincent, Mr Reynolds was able to meet the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Labour. They discussed the work of the Trust and the role it is playing on St Vincent and the Grenadines. He was also able to obtain video footage of the bus, the forest and the parrots. This will be incorporated in a video which will show the various projects which the Trust has supported. All in all, the three day visit to this beautiful island was an outstanding success.

Acknowledgement
Grateful thanks are due to Forestry Division personnel for their time and hospitality.

This short speech was kindly delivered on Mike Reynolds' behalf by Alleyne Regis of RARE, at the official handing over ceremony on St Vincent.

I cannot tell you how disappointed I am not to be present at the handing over of the Vincie Express. As you may know, this is the third conservation bus we have sent, working together with RARE Centre, to the Caribbean; the previous ones went to St Lucia and Dominica. But for me personally, and for all of us involved in the work of The World Parrot Trust, the 'Vincie Express' is easily the most important.

Rosemary Low (wearing new WPT T-shirt) standing by a mural on the aviary wall.

A class of St Vincent children about to experience the 'Vincie Express', guided by Ruth Knights (on right).

If I give you a little history, you will see why this is so. 22 years ago I started a bird garden in England, specialising in breeding endangered species. I wrote to your government to say that if, by some miracle, it might be possible for us to have a pair of St Vincent Parrots, we would be delighted. About a year later we heard that a pair of parrots had been confiscated, and could be sent to us with full government approval.

That was in 1974. In 1980 we hatched a chick, but it did not survive. Only in 1991 did we succeed in rearing our first St Vincent Parrot, the first in Europe, and only the second in the world in zoos and bird gardens which are members of the government approved St Vincent Parrot Consortium. All the birds held by consortium members remain the property of St Vincent. So, far away in a remote corner of England, we have added to the numbers of your beautiful, endangered national bird.

A little more history: in 1978 I visited St Vincent because I wanted to see your parrot in the wild. With the help of Dr. Earle Kirby and 'Nicky' Nicholls, my wife and I had the enormous pleasure of seeing the St Vincent Parrot flying free in the Buccament Valley. It was the first time I had seen any parrot flying in the wild, and it had a great effect on me.

It made me realise that nothing was more important than preserving the wild places on which the parrots rely for their survival around the world. This realisation, this flash of inspiration which I experienced on St Vincent, led eventually to our setting up The World Parrot Trust in 1989. Why parrots? Because they, alone among birds, have won a special place in the hearts and minds of man. This is demonstrated by the fact that over 50 million parrots are kept as pets all over the world. If we can persuade people to care about the birds that actually live in their houses, perhaps we can get them to care about the whole of nature.

The World Parrot Trust is still very small, but it has 2000 influential members in 43 countries. We have projects for parrot survival in 10 countries; it would be more, but our funds simply don't allow any more at present. About one third of our annual income has been spent to create the Vincie Express. That is how important this project is to us, and we hope you will be as proud of it as we are. The main message we try to get across to people who keep and enjoy parrots is that they must 'put something back' to help the survival of parrots in the wild. At The World Parrot Trust and at Paradise Park where the Trust is based, we feel indebted to St Vincent for entrusting us with their precious birds. Now, however, we can feel we have 'put something back'.

We will write about the Vincie Express, and 'Vincie' himself, in our own publications and in other media worldwide. A very large audience will come to know how well St Vincent is developing its vital agriculture, while protecting its forests and its unique national bird. Like ripples on a pond, this knowledge will spread, and hopefully it will help the development of your tourism. We attend avicultural conventions worldwide, several every year, and in the next few months I will be able to tell audiences in Australia and the United States of the excellent conservation work that is under way here on St Vincent.

Note from Hon Director:
Rosemary Low and Mike and Audrey Reynolds met all their own expenses on this visit to St Vincent.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR **Members write**

Currumbin Sanctuary
P.O. Box 344, Palm Beach,
Queensland, 4221

Dear Rosemary

Enclosed is a copy of a brochure just produced to encourage people to look for the Coxen's Fig-Parrot *Cyclopsitta diophtalma coxeni* and report sightings as part of the recovery program for this highly endangered species. It is currently thought that the effective population size is possibly as low as Ne < 50.

Very few confirmed sightings have occurred in recent years indicating a tremendous problem with the species. Very little is also known about the biology of this species. Surveys are being carried out in areas of previous sightings but to date these have come up with only one sighting of this parrot despite **many** hours in the field.

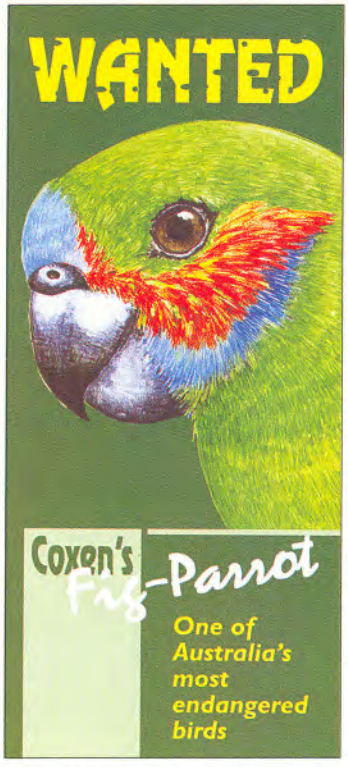
Currumbin Sanctuary is currently involved in working on the analogous Red-browed Fig-Parrot *Cyclopsitta diophtalma macleayana* from North Queensland in order to develop techniques for captive breeding. Our main focus is the development of techniques for parent raising as this will be crucial to the recovery efforts for the Coxen's Fig-Parrot should captive breeding become a necessity. We have also been looking at fostering chicks under other parents as another option in such a program especially if we bring in nestlings. Our final test will be the development of rehabilitation techniques for the release of captive bred birds back into the wild.

To date after a number of ups and downs we are confident that we can breed fig-parrots fairly successfully. This season we have had numerous successful clutches with one pair currently laying a third clutch after successfully fledging five chicks in total. We also had a pair of birds of 12 months of age - the male not yet fully coloured - hatching chicks (which unfortunately DNS). This is the youngest breeding recorded to date.

I hope you find the brochure of interest. If you would like more information on the project I would be happy to supply it.

Hope you have a happy New Year,

Yours sincerely
Liz Romer
Curator Animal Collections



There follows some excerpts of information from the brochure supplied by Liz Romer.

On The Brink
Coxen's Fig-Parrot is one of seven Australian birds in immediate danger of extinction. Historical records show that it was numerous in subtropical rainforests between the Mary and Richmond Rivers. Reports during recent decades suggest that it occurred north to Bundaberg and south to the Port Macquarie hinterland.
Today most reports are from the foothills of the ranges around the QLD/NSW border.

The Recovery Plan
A national recovery team was formed in Brisbane in June 1993 to instigate actions to save Coxen's Fig Parrot.
A search conducted by the Queensland Department of Environment & Heritage began in August 1993. The study area is mainly the region bordered by Beaudesert, Warwick, Casino and Murwillumbah.
Results of the study will be incorporated in a recovery plan which may recommend such procedures as the rehabilitation of habitat and/or a breeding program for captive birds.
At Currumbin Sanctuary techniques of captive breeding are being developed with the closely related Red-browed Fig-Parrot from north Queensland.

235 North Walnut Street
Bryan, Ohio
43506

Dear Rosemary Low

Your article in 'PsittaScene' *Stop The Trade In Parrot Chicks* touched my heart.
We have Bird Fairs in the U.S.A. where you see rows of frightened featherless bundles being sold with syringes and a bag of baby formula to unsuspecting people with no experience who with the best of intentions only want a baby to love. They have no idea of the potential problems they will encounter. I too would like to see a law against this but as a realist expect this problem only to get worse.

Please take heart that there are some caring Aviculturists over here.
I am a small hobbiest raising six species of Amazon parrots. We now have three generations in our household. When I realized that some babies had to be sold a vow was made to only sell weaned, vet checked and now zoogen sexed babies.
My friends in Aviculture have the same standards. We are mostly people with a small flock of the birds that we love. We all spoon feed and trade offspring for the future generations.
I am so looking forward to hearing you speak in Florida in January. It is caring people like you who give me hope that there will be a future for our wonderful parrots. I have enclosed some pictures so you can see some of the lovely juveniles that have been raised together.

Sincerely
Diana M. Holloway

We receive over one hundred letters a week in our mail bag. The contents range from people seeking information about the Trust, funding, news on the wild bird trade and requests for advice on parrot care. But we also receive many enquiries such as this from children who are showing an early concern for the welfare of birds and animals:-

Tregassow Manor
St. Erme, Nr. Truro
TR4 9BL

Dear World Parrot Trust

I am writing on account about the cruelty that is going on in the world around us. I would be very much obliged if you could please send me some leaflets concerning the cruelty the parrots suffer. My friends and I have made a small wildlife club for giving out leaflets concerning not only birds but many other species that are being cruely treated or ones that are indangered. Thank you very much.

Yours Sincerely
Mo Keeler (Aged 11)

One of Diana Holloway's hand-reared Orange-winged Amazons.

THE WORLD PARROT TRUST GALLERY OF ENDANGERED PARROTS

By Rosemary Low

No.4 Ultramarine Lory *(Vini ultramarina)*

In the second draft of **Parrots, An Action Plan for their Conservation: 1993-1998,** produced this year by ICBP, 17 species are listed as being critically endangered. The plight of some of these species, such as Spix's Macaw, Imperial and Puerto Rican Amazons and Kakapo are very well known. Many, perhaps most, people will not be familiar with the names of some of the others on the list. The names of others are known but the fact that they are very seriously endangered is not. In the coming issues we will present a series of short items to highlight these birds.

In the Pacific lies a remote group of islands called the Marquesas. Endemic to this group is one of the most exquisite of all parrots - and one of the most endangered. The Ultramarine Lory now survives on only one island throughout its original range, on Ua Huka. The population there is believed to be between 1,000 and 1,500 but it is threatened by rats and by human activities. On another island in the group, Ua Pou, this tiny lory had almost disappeared five years after the arrival of rats. Because of its extreme vulnerability, translocation of Ultramarine Lories to the island of Fatu Hiva is being carried out. The hope is that the species can survive there should it be extirpated on Ua Huka. In 1992 the Delegation of the Environment for French Polynesia and the Zoological Society of San Diego joined forces to translocate seven birds to Fatu Hiva. (Extreme weather conditions made it impossible to capture more.) At least five of these birds survived and are often seen by people of the village of Omoa. Alan Lieberman and Cynthia Kuehler of San Diego Zoo, reported to The World Parrot Trust that seven more Ultramarine Lories were translocated to Fatu Hiva in November 1993. Future visits to Fatu Hiva are planned to report on the status of the translocated population.

ACTION PAGE

SURPRISING NEWS ABOUT GOFFIN'S COCKATOO

Members will probably recall that the Trust has had two involvements with Goffin's Cockatoo *Cacatua goffini*. First, we went to considerable effort - and expense - to secure the release of 319 cockatoos being held in small cages on Yamdena, a large Indonesian island which is the principal habitat of the species. We felt that this involvement was justified on welfare grounds, and also because such a large number of birds might be a significant part of the remaining population. We also hoped that the release of these CITES Appendix 1 birds, under official supervision, might deliver a message that these birds should no longer be captured.

Our second commitment to helping the species took the form of contributing £2,000 towards the cost of a Birdlife International expedition to establish the status of the population on Yamdena.An early and incomplete report has just been received, and this indicates that the population on this island alone can be estimated at around 370,000. The total population must, therefore, be above 500,000, and so Goffin's Cockatoo is likely to be removed from the CITES Appendix 1 list.

We expect a full report shortly, and will publish it in 'PsittaScene' in due course.

A SPECIAL EVENING WITH JOE FORSHAW

The Avicultural Society of Australia which meets monthly in Melbourne, the capital city of Victoria, hosted a special meeting late last year so that Joe Forshaw, the noted parrot authority could address the society, and that a party of visiting overseas aviculturists he had been showing Australian parrots in the wild, could meet some Aussie aviculturists.

The audience of 220 included two ASA members from the island state of Tasmania, a member and his wife from Perth, Western Australia (which is the other side of the continent!), several members of four of the society's twelve country-based branches, and 16 "special overseas guests" - from Denmark, Germany, Holland and England.

In his address **Knowing Australia's Parrots Intimately,** which was illustrated with colour slides, Joe Forshaw's in-depth knowledge of the parrots of Australia shone through. His informative and thought-provoking address concluded with an excellent question and answer segment.

Each overseas visitor was presented with a copy of the society's excellent publication **Avi-Index** (an index of *Australian Aviculture* over 43 years) inscribed and autographed by the compilers Charles Hibbert and Ken Kleesh to commemorate their visit to the Avicultural Society of Australia.

Graeme Hyde
(Secretary ASA)

This is how the Goffin's Cockatoos were being kept, before we arranged their release back into the wild.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

...there's a way to help parrot conservation. The World Parrot Trust is now in its fifth year and has established a sound reputation for its various initiatives to help the parrots. It is also generally accepted that we achieve a great deal with our limited resources.

This being so, we feel we may now ask our members to consider a legacy to the Trust when making their wills. Anyone interested could write to our administrator, Judith Venning, for a form of words which may be helpful.

Thank you.
Michael Reynolds
Hon. Director

IF I COULD KEEP ONLY ONE PAIR OF PARROTS

In past issues of 'PsittaScene' some well known people in the world of parrots have answered the above question. Now we are inviting members to take over this spot. Write and tell us which species you would keep if you were limited to only one pair of parrots, in about 600 to 800 words please. Enclose a photograph of yourself - or, better still, one of you with your favourite species. And give the reasons for your choice. We will feature the best answers under this heading.

NEWS FROM OTHER WORLD PARROT TRUST BRANCHES

The **Canadian World Parrot Trust** will have a booth at the 'All about Pets' show at the International Center, Toronto, from 31 March to 4 April 1994. This show is expected to have a total of 50000 visitors. Any Canadian member who could help with manning the booth should call Linda Anderson on 613.741.7606.

WPT Benelux 9th Parrot Symposium will be held at the well-known bird park 'Avifauna' at Alpen a/d Rijn, Holland on April 16 1994. The programme is excellent, and delegates are expected from Germany, France and the UK, as well as Holland and Belgium. For more information, booking forms etc., contact:
Belgium - R. Bejstrup
Tel: 32.3.2526773.
Fax: 32.3.2523118.
Netherlands - T. Nuyten
Tel: 31.1640.40567.
Fax: 31.15.782440.

AN APOLOGY

I recently read my way through the seventeen issues of 'PsittaScene', mainly to get a feeling about how the Trust has developed over the past four years. I was shocked to come across a rather nasty piece of writing executed by myself. It concerned a gentleman who kept his macaws in rather small cages, and in trying to make the point that I thought these should have more space, I was unnecessarily offensive to the aviculturist concerned. I have had an opportunity to apologise to him in person, but feel that in fairness I should publish this apology here, so that his friends will know that I regret my intemperate comments.

Concerned readers will be glad to know that the macaws now live in more spacious accommodation.

Michael Reynolds

The objective of the Trust is to promote the survival of all parrot species and the welfare of individual birds. The Trust is a very active body which constantly pursues policies to ensure the general public world-wide are fully informed of developments relating to parrot conservation. The aim is also to pursuade parrot keepers to care for their birds in the best possible way , and to encourage responsible aviculture.

The World Parrot Trust

The work of the Trust: a brief review

Hyacinth Fund

This special fund, launched in 1990, has provided over £13,500 to help conservation measures for both the Hyacinth and Lear's Macaw. Current work focuses on our Palm for a Parrot campaign.

Caribbean Buses

The 'Jacquot Express' was sent to St. Lucia in 1991, the 'Sisserou Express' was sent to Dominica in 1992. We are now about to send the 'Vincie Express' to St. Vincent. This unique 'conservation bus' scheme is remarkable value for money. Each bus costs around £25,000.

Indonesian Parrots

Many Indonesian parrots are under threat and with the particular help of our Benelux Chapter we are doing all we can. Recently we achieved the release of over 300 Goffin's Cockatoos held by traders and we are supporting an ICBP survey of Yamdena.

Amazons In Brazil

The Trust has been invited by the Brazilian Government to help with the conservation of all its parrot species. We have recently contributed towards a new survey to establish the status in the wild of two Amazon parrots: A. pretrei and A. vinacea.

Black Cockatoos in Australia

The Trust provides half the cost of a four year programme to assist the survival of an endangered sub-species of this spectacular cockatoo in Victoria. Cost: £8,000.

Echo Parakeet

This is the world's rarest parrot, as only about 17 still exist on Mauritius. The Trust has provided continuous support for this species, including supplying a four-wheel drive vehicle, a computer and other equipment, and helping with training and diets. Our total investment is over £20,000.

Other Activities

The Trust has supported and attended parrot conservation workshops and conventions in Brazil, Paraguay, Honduras, Mexico, Holland, Spain, UK and the USA. It has contributed towards hurricane relief for aviculturists in southern Florida. It is researching ways to improve the conditions in which parrots are kept. Through its 'Parrot Bureau' it seeks to inform the public about parrot conservation and welfare. Principally through the publication, 'PsittaScene', it sets out to inform parrot aviculturists and others about developments in conservation. The World Parrot Trust aims to represent the interests of enlightened, responsible aviculture in its contacts with national and international bodies and authorities. In all its work, the interests of the parrots themselves come first.

Help save the parrots of the world

Please join the Trust, or encourage friends to join. Subscription rates are: UK and Europe (single) £15, (family) £20; Fellow (Life Member) £250/US $400; Overseas Airmail £20/US $30; Overseas Surface Mail £15/US $25. Please send your cheque or credit card details to: The World Parrot Trust, Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4Y, UK. Regd. UK Charity No. 800944 Tel: (0736) 753365 Fax: (0736) 756438

PARROTS IN THE WILD

THE KAKA *(Nestor meridionalis)*

New Zealand's forest parrot, the Kaka, is an outstandingly handsome and intelligent bird. It is also of interest for having perhaps the widest range of calls of any parrot. Sadly, it has suffered a great decline in recent years, due to destruction of its forest habitat and the introduction of such mammals as brush-tailed possums and deer which are food competitors. It is now common only on a few off-shore islands such as Kapiti, where the bird depicted was photographed by Rosemary Low. Kapiti is an island reserve managed by the Department of Conservation. It is situated 5km off the west coast of southern North Island.

We intend to continue this series of 'Parrots in the Wild', and if any reader can offer us a high quality shot that might be suitable, please get in touch.

Designed and produced by DESIGN & PRINT SERVICES (0736) 753638